



## Getting the Full Value of Your \$4 Gallon of Gasoline

**Release Date:** March 2, 2012

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**Editor's Note:** National Weights and Measures Week is March 1-7, 2012. Weights and Measures Week marks the signing of the first weights and measure law by President John Adams on March 2, 1799. Wisconsin's program dates back to 1839, when the Wisconsin Territorial legislature enacted a law standardizing weights and measures to benefit both retailers and consumers alike.

**There are opportunities for reporters to ride along with a DATCP Weights and Measures inspector. Those interested should call Jerad Albracht at 608-224-5007.**

MADISON – With gasoline prices on a steady rise and analysts projecting prices above \$4 per gallon this spring, “value” may not be a word most people would associate with filling their tank. If you see the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)’s “Weights and Measures” seal on the pump, however, you can at least be certain that you are getting the value that you pay for.

“Every penny counts at the pump,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “The DATCP Weights and Measures seal is your assurance that the pump has passed inspection and you are getting your money’s worth.”

109 cities throughout Wisconsin contract with DATCP for weights and measures inspection services for their gasoline pumps. 28 cities run their own weights and measures program and apply their own seal at gas stations. All other remaining rural communities are also covered by DATCP.

In a 2011 audit, 99.6% of pumps tested by DATCP dispensed an accurate measurement of gasoline or undercharged for the gasoline delivered. In addition to monitoring gas station pumps, the Weights and Measures team also audits checkout scanners and grocery store scales and package weights.

If you feel that a gasoline pump, checkout scanner or grocery store scale is registering incorrectly, call the Division of Consumer Protection at 800-422-7128.

Since you cannot control the gas prices, consider these suggestions from the U.S. Department of Energy to make the most of the gasoline you purchase:

- Drive sensibly. Besides being unsafe, driving aggressively (speeding, rapid acceleration and braking) can lower your gas mileage by 33% at highway speeds and 5% in town. On the highway, gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 60 miles per hour.
- Keep your engine tuned up. Repairing a car that is noticeably out of tune or that has failed its emissions test can improve its fuel economy by an average of 4%. Check the repair facility with Consumer Protection.
- Check your tire pressure. Underinflated tires can impair your gas mileage. Properly inflated tires are also safer and last longer.
- Limit your air conditioner (AC) usage. The AC system taxes the engine, requiring more fuel. Remember that the defrost position on many vehicles uses the AC to dry out the air.
- Avoid idling. Depending on engine size and AC usage, idling can use a quarter to a half gallon of fuel per hour! If you intend to sit for a minute or more, turn off your engine.
- Lose the heavy loads. If you weigh down your automobile in winter for traction, consider removing the weight as spring draws near. In a smaller car, even an extra 100 pounds of weight could decrease your gas mileage by up to 2%.

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- Reconsider your commute. Stagger your work hours to avoid idling during peak traffic. Take advantage of carpools and ride-share programs or consider biking or walking if they are options. Work from a home office if your company allows for telecommuting.

“There is only so much you can do to avoid pain at the pump, but modifying your driving habits can save you gas and keep cash in your wallet,” noted Chalmers.

For more information or to file a consumer complaint, visit Consumer Protection’s website at [datcp.wisconsin.gov](http://datcp.wisconsin.gov), send an e-mail to [datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp@datcp.wisconsin.gov) or call toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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